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| **Date:** | 5 April 2012 |
| **Subject:** | Cultural awareness helps tourists feel at home |

With employers in the tourism industry seeking well-trained, skilled workers, an online training and assessment program is being developed to teach learners to communicate respectfully and understand the cultural needs of tourists to Australia.

The *Passport to Assessment for Learning* package will deliver high resolution audio visual stimuli in real-time to replicate workplace situations involving cultural conflict the student is likely to face as an employee in the tourism industry.

“Tourism is a people industry, and staff must be able to deal successfully with people from diverse social and cultural backgrounds,” says project manager Peter Rutherford, of Brisbane North Institute of TAFE’s Blended Learning Solutions team.

Taking advantage of the rollout of the National Broadband Network (NBN), the online learning package requires students to demonstrate the knowledge and skills to recognise issues with a cultural basis and act to resolve those issues.

After viewing each segment of the video, students have 30 seconds to prepare and deliver oral responses to the virtual client. This direct recording of the responses to a server within strict time limits replicates a high pressure situation where an employee needs to think quickly and respond immediately to a client.

“High speed broadband will prove its value by enabling the effective delivery of the product and the return of student responses through an innovative scenario-based assessment task,” says Rutherford.

“With some two million international visitors to Queensland each year, it is essential that training organisations teach students how to meet the needs of people from different cultures.”

The project will initially target Certificate III Tourism students who are typically young school leavers largely unfamiliar with travel in a foreign country and the difficulties international clients may face while travelling in Australia.

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The project has been made possible through funding from the National VET E-learning Strategy, whose NBN E-learning Programs provide opportunitiesto create innovative approaches to demonstrate the power of broadband to enhance outcomes for learners, and promote growth in broadband-based training as the NBN rollout proceeds.

The National VET E-learning Strategy is the responsibility of the Flexible Learning Advisory Group (FLAG), a key policy advisory group on national directions and priorities for information and communication technologies in the VET sector.

“By sponsoring e-learning programs at NBN sites, we are expanding participation and access for learners, stimulating innovative approaches to training and employment, and improving the skill levels of the Australian workforce,” says FLAG Chair Raymond Garrand, Chief Executive of the South Australian Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology.

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**Core statements for editorial use**

* The National VET E-learning Strategy 2012-2015 (‘the Strategy’) is aimed at strengthening the Australian training sector’s use of new learning technologies, stimulating innovative approaches to increasing participation in training and employment, and improving the skill levels of the Australian workforce
* Investment in the Strategy will stimulate innovative approaches to increasing participation in training and improve the skill levels of the Australian workforce
* To enable the three-year program of action, government funding has been approved to:
* capitalise on the rollout of the National Broadband Network by demonstrating the benefits of the national investment in broadband
* support large-scale workforce development in industry through partnerships and comprehensive e-learning advice
* expand participation and access for individuals through e-learning programs delivering foundation skills and e-literacy
* The Strategy is managed by the Flexible Learning Advisory Group (FLAG), a key policy advisory group on national directions and priorities for information and communication technologies in the VET sector
* The chair of FLAG is Mr Raymond Garrand, Chief Executive of the South Australian Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology.

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